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Title The new age of ageing. How society needs to change (book review)

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Caroline Lodge, Eileen Carnell, and Marianne Coleman, *The New Age of Ageing: How Society Needs to Change*, Policy Press, Bristol, 2016, 276 pp., pbk £14.99, ISBN 978 1 4473 2683 0.

The New Age of Ageing is grounded in the observation that more people are ageing longer, and that a more age-inclusive society is necessary. Its purpose is to "present some alternative ways of thinking, talking and planning about ageing: a new paradigm of an age-inclusive society" (p. 2), at the individual, family, community, neighbourhood and societal level. At the core of the book lies its concern with inequalities and ageist prejudices and practices. Potential solutions and directions for change are summarized in the final sections of each chapter, called 'What needs to change?'. These sections together encompass the authors' vision of a more age-inclusive, society.

The book is based on the authors' own experiences as scholars and, perhaps more importantly, women in their sixties, feminists and social and political activists. Furthermore, they draw on in-depth interviews with over fifty (older) adults, aged from 50 to 90. The interviews that the authors conducted with older adults were, predominantly, with relatively affluent, highly educated, white people. Participants include, for instance, an IT-specialist, teacher, district nurse and surgeon. An important shortcoming of the book is that the authors hardly discuss the implications of drawing on the experiences of relatively affluent, privileged older adults, in discussing inequalities. Thus, what is missing, is a critical account of how the participants' identities will have contributed to the book being a very specific window on our ageing society. For instance, although poverty in later life is discussed as having enormous potential implications for quality of life, the authors did not draw on first-hand experiences of poverty – which will have impacted the findings.

Chapters 2-4 ('Going on and on'; 'How society ages people', and 'Time bombs and age-quakes') provide the background against which the book is situated, and discusses the demographic, social and economic aspects of ageing as they occur in the United Kingdom. Although the book is relevant for similar Western countries, I think the book should have used more international data and examples in order to appeal to a broad audience outside the United Kingdom.

Chapters 5-10 (Overlooked and underestimated: older consumers; Working together longer; Media exclusion; Cover up; Everybody's gotta be somewhere!; and Who cares?) are concerned with the exclusionary practices that older adults may face in different parts of their lives: consumption, employment, the media, appearance, housing and care. These chapters largely focus on the aspects of our ageing societies which should be changed, in line with the activist agenda of the book. For instance, Chapter 6 explores the ageism that older workers often face, and how this could be countered. These chapters provide relevant insights into the experiences of older adults in the UK

and ties these to current developments in policy and practice. What I found interesting in relation to the consumption patterns of older adults, was the notion of "the grey pound" (page 69), which expresses the potential of older consumers well. In Chapter 9 about housing, however, the authors missed the opportunity to connect the idea of age-friendly communities with that of age-friendly cities. The concept of age-friendly cities has been developed by the World Health Organisation, and is currently being applied in urban environments around the world, Manchester in the United Kingdom being one of the most prominent examples (WHO, 2007).

Chapters 10-14 ('The dark side'; 'The best bits'; 'Wiser together'; 'We're still here') explore the more 'philosophical' aspects of ageing. It does discuss the dark and bright sides of the coin of later life: as a period of approaching death, mourning, loss of loved ones, social isolation, and lack of purpose; and as a period, of freedom, meaning, and deepened social relations. What is nice about the book that it shows how later life can be both a gratifying and a depressing experience, as all phases in life – although the interconnections between the two extremes could have been explored more. In exploring the good and bad things about later life, the book does resemble some of the themes addressed in Karl Pillemer's (2011) book, *30 Lessons for living. Tried and true advice from the wisest Americans*. These include, for instance, lessons to engage in fruitful social relations, and for living without regrets and fear.

The book concludes with 'Our Vision for the Future', where the authors summarise the challenges, and related actions that lie ahead. However, the identified actions remain quite general and visionary, rather than practical. An example is the recommendation to "provide respectful care, appropriate to the individual" (p. 250), which is hard to disagree with, but very difficult to translate into concrete action. Overall, the themes addressed in the book do provide a comprehensive account of the issues associated with ageing in the United Kingdom, that is grounded in the experiences of older adults. In so doing, the book does what it promises, and provides an accessible introduction to *The New Age of Ageing*.

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